

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Office of National Estimates

8 June 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : The Outlook for Jordan*

1. The present situation in Jordan is critical. The principal reason why it has not deteriorated even more drastically is that none of the disruptive and competitive forces unleashed by the events of the last few months has as yet proved strong and unified enough to gain control. The situation is marked by increasing internal instability and growing opposition to the West. The anti-Western former Palestinian and refugee elements -- who constitute two-thirds of the population -- are emerging as dominant factors in Jordan's political affairs -- a development underlined by their role in blocking Jordanian adherence to the Baghdad Pact early this year and by King Hussein's subsequent dismissal of Glubb and other senior British officers of the Arab Legion.

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2. Glubb's departure has led to a sharp decline in the reliability and effectiveness of the Arab Legion as the main pillar of royal authority and stability. It has precipitated a chaotic scramble for power in the government and Legion, with the 20-year old King Hussein at present giving his support to a "Free Officer" group. While the "Free Officer" group has not as yet articulated a clear-cut program and is itself divided into rival factions, it clearly has more in common with the militant anti-Western, anti-Israeli, and anti-monarchial nationalism of Egypt's RCC than with the old-line, pro-UK Transjordanians.

3. Foreign Orientation. These developments represent a success for the ESS Arab bloc, which for more than a year has worked to wean Jordan away from the UK and Iraq, and to incorporate it into the Egyptian sphere of influence. Egypt has worked closely with elements of the "Free Officers." It has also demonstrated ability to stir up mob pressure in the towns and refugee camps, as it did successfully on the occasion

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of the anti-Baghdad Pact riots. Egypt's efforts in these regards have benefitted from Saudi financial handouts and the active support of the small but well-organized Communist party. However, their success has resulted mainly from the depth of Palestinian feeling against the West and against the UK-supported Jordanian government on the Israeli issue and from their growing faith in Nasr as the man who will eventually lead the Arabs to victory over the Zionists.

4. Iraq and the UK have failed effectively to counter these adverse trends. The Iraqi government appears to be belatedly coming to appreciate the need to do something, but is confronted with the fact that pro-Iraqi Jordanians are presently too weak and dispirited to provide a basis for effective Iraqi efforts in Jordan short of using outright force.

5. The British, with their once-powerful position in Jordan rapidly disintegrating, still appear willing to continue financial and military training support for Jordan and to

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accept a revision of the Anglo-Jordanian treaty in the hope of salvaging some vestige of stability and pro-Western orientation in Jordan. However, any such revision would almost certainly reduce the military usefulness of UK facilities in Jordan; and since the British financial contribution does not appear likely, in the face of present trends, to bring the UK any tangible political benefits, the British will in the longer run probably become increasingly unwilling to continue the subsidy.

6. In these circumstances, Jordan's present drift toward the ESS Bloc is likely to continue. It will probably accept some ESS aid in support of its project to amalgamate the National Guard and the Arab Legion into a single National Army, and will cooperate with Egypt and Syria on anti-Israeli military planning. Egyptian influence with Jordanian leaders and pressure groups will probably continue to grow and, as in the case of the Baghdad Pact riots, to place major limits on the Jordanian government's freedom of action. Following

- 4 -

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the Egyptian and Syrian lead, Jordan may move toward at least indirect acceptance of Bloc support.

7. On the other hand, so long as King Hussein retains power, he and other Jordan leaders will probably do their best to avoid a commitment to the ESS bloc so complete as clearly to jeopardize the British subsidy. Hussein, moreover, will probably continue to value the Hashimite tie with Iraq, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] In his endeavors to retain ties with the UK and Iraq as well as the ESS states, Hussein may have the support of certain elements of the "Free Officer" movement -- possibly even its currently foremost figure, the new Chief of Staff, Nuwar. And so long as Jordan remains reasonably responsive to Egyptian desires, Nasr himself may remain prepared to accept limited UK-Jordan ties and a special relationship between Iraq and Jordan -- particularly since he probably views the basic political trends as favorable to Egypt. [REDACTED]

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- 5 -

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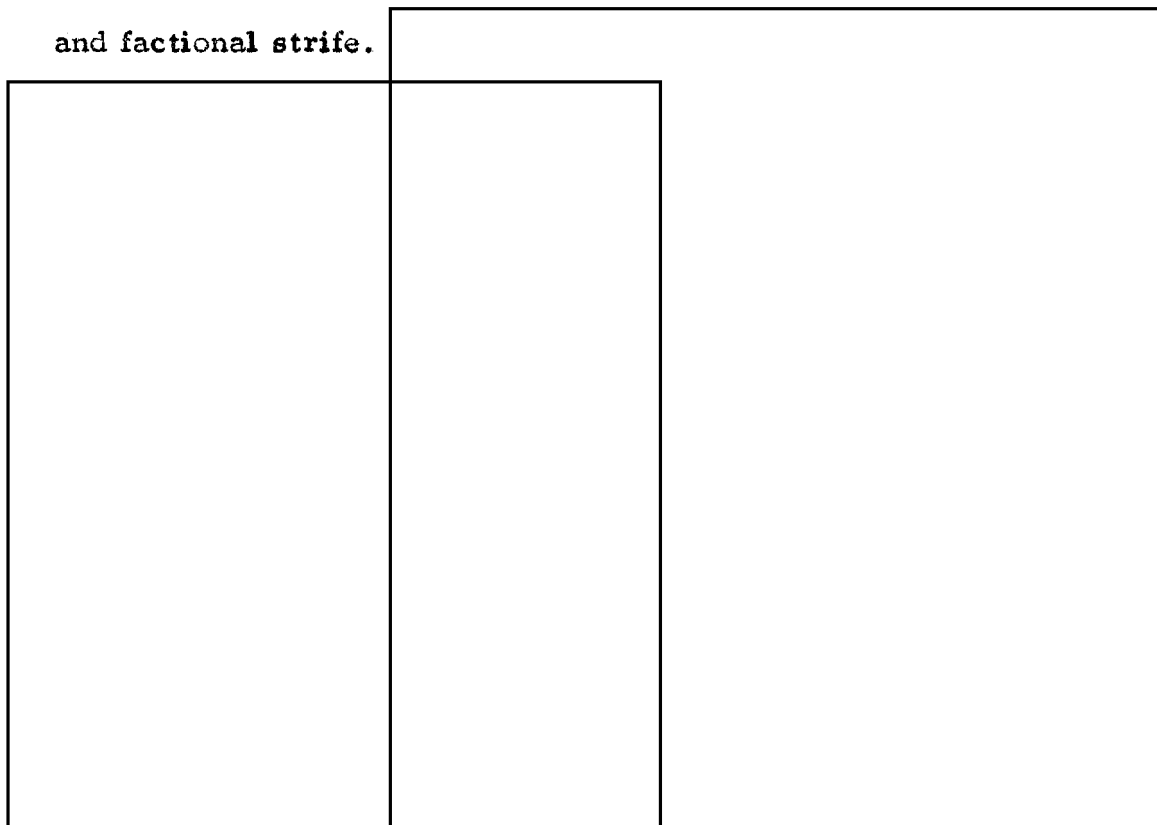
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8. The Internal Power Struggle. The precise course of the internal struggle for power is impossible to predict. The present outlook is for a period of political confusion and factional strife.

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10. Israel, for its part, is also alarmed by increased Jordanian cooperation with the ESS bloc, by the removal of the restraining British influence in Jordan, and by the prospects of a decline in the willingness and ability of the Legion to maintain relative quiet on the border. Any comfort Israel may derive from the weakening of the Legion as a fighting force is probably overshadowed by the belief that, in any situation short of war, Jordan will henceforth be harder to get along with.

11. Despite its misgivings, Israel is not likely to undertake major military intervention in Jordan unless confronted with extreme provocation. Probable international reaction constitutes too great a deterrent. Israel will, however, continue to maintain a tough posture along the border, and to deal sternly with incursions and harassments from the Jordan

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side. The Israeli response would be particularly strong if these should take the form of a sustained terrorist campaign, such as Egypt recently sponsored. Other than in these circumstances, or in the event of full scale Arab-Israeli war, the possibility of Israeli intervention would be greatest in the event of a collapse of the Jordanian government, leading to efforts by the other Arab states to take over portions of Jordanian territory. In the chaotic conditions likely to accompany such a development, Israel might move into West Jordan -- justifying the step on the grounds of self-defense.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

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National Estimates

- 9 -

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